INFORMATION NEEDS AND GATHERING HABITS OF LAWYERS: A STUDY OF LAWYERS OF KARNATAKA HIGH COURT

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By

ROHINI T.

Guide

PROF. P.G. TADASAD

Professor and Chairman

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

KARNATAKA STATE WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY, VIJAYAPURA

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INTRODUCTION:

Information is required by all. But it's availability in different formats, different categories, different channels makes it very difficult to access and use it. Its need is based on certain factors such as work activity, discipline, responsibility, nature etc.

Information is very much essential to accomplish a work an assignment. It is indeed to essential to practice a profession.

For decades, information need was used as a primitive concept on two levels. On an individual level it signified a cognitive state which underlines questions posed to information systems and requests for information in general; on a social level it signified information required for functioning and keeping abreast of a whole, such as chemists. [1]

We are living in the age of information. Without information, survival of any individual is not an easy task. Even a lawyer also requires information. But this is dependent upon their level of understanding. At court they need different sources like law dictionaries, encyclopedia, and reporters, bare acts and statutes etc.

Lawyers need information for various reasons. A legal advisor can help people decide the best framework for setting up an inheritance plan. A legal advisor may do research, provide relevant materials, and cite specific laws to help craft a plan for a client. Employment law professionals and organizations may offer free legal advice via telephone. A legal advisor might help a worker injured on the job explore their options for compensation. A legal advisor is typically a lawyer who specializes in providing legal assistance. A legal advisor is typically a lawyer or other type of law professional who specializes in offering legal assistance on a variety of matters. While they may sometimes pursue lawsuits and litigation for their clients, their general job is to ensure that a client's actions in a particular matter are legal. The advisor may work on a freelance basis, or may have a permanent job as a counselor to a company, government office or politician, or individual client.

Many legal advisors specialize in a particular area of law. Family law advisors may provide legal services that concern divorce, custody, and inheritance issues. An employment law professional may be concerned with worker's compensation issues, workplace harassment or wrongful dismissal suits. Commercial lawyers often serve as advisors to businesses and corporations. Legal advisors that work for a governmental department will typically specialize in issues such as constitutional law, international law, or public policy.

A legal advisor may serve as a resource for an informed opinion on a legal question. He or she may do research, provide relevant materials, and cite specific laws to help explain a law or craft a plan for a client. In some cases, an advisor may assist in preparing paperwork or examining contracts and other documents to help ensure that an action is being done legally. In some cases, an advisor may also serve as a client's attorney, representing him or her in court. [2]

They use different methods to gather information from various sources. The volume of law information available in variety of media, and the means of access has also increased. New indexes, abstracts, reviews, current awareness bulletin are appearing and their number is also increasing day by day. On the other side, people tend to make only a minimal effort to obtain information. [3]

The availability of information in the electronic media has added for the problem but created an opportunity for global access of information as the web. The digital libraries and information retrieval (IR) systems have become a major form of information access for many users of information. The electronic information environment requires an awareness of the information system, the user needs and the technologies that are available to support user interaction with information. Attention to users of digital information systems and their need from an information retrieval perspective is very important. [4]

In the present electronic age, information seeking and the usage pattern of lawyers have changed enormously. The lawyers highly rely on reliable retrospective and current information for their activities. The information seeking behaviors vary with several

factors. [5] Hence, their needs, seeking behavior and gathering habits have to be studied. In this regard the present study has been under taken.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A Literature search made on LISA [6], LISTA [7], Emeraldinsight.com [8], indicates number of studies in the recent past were carried out to find out the information seeking behavior of users in different types of libraries all over the world. Some of the surveys in the context of lawyers are reviewed here.

There are several studies conducted at international level to examine the information needs and information seeking behavior of lawyers. This section will briefly review the studies on information seeking behavior of lawyers for gaining a better understanding of lawyers' information seeking behavior.

Chancellor [9] explored to determine whether time constraint is a factor in how attorneys access and obtain legal information. Kuhlthau and Tama [10] studied variety of tasks that involve lawyers as a particular group of information workers, how they use information to accomplish their work, and the role mediators' play in their process of information seeking and use. Prabhavathi [11] explored the information seeking behavior of post graduate students of SPMVV.

Kadli and Hanchinal [12] examined the information seeking behavior of students of two law colleges of Mumbai. Thorsteinsdottir [13] identified information seeking behaviour of distance learning students. Khan and Bhatti [14] conducted an investigation on law faculty members. Their preferences regarding various information sources, channels, methods, library use patterns, convenient study places, satisfaction level and problems encountered by them in their information needs and seeking have been explored though quantitative survey. One of the reports explained about the information-seeking behaviors of lawyers [15].

Kerins, Madden and Fulton [16] carried out research work on information seeking and students studying for professional careers and the cases of engineering and law students in Ireland. Findings revealed similar patterns in the information seeking behavior

between students studying to become professionals and information seeking patterns of these groups.

Olorunfemi and Mostert [17] examined the information seeking behavior of undergraduate law students in a developing country.

Thanuskodi [18] identified the information needs and use pattern of District Court Lawyers who were using a variety of information sources to satisfy their information needs. These studies observed that majority of respondents were not aware of e-resources.

Howard, Lehmann and Rood [19] conducted a case study to investigate the information behavior of a group of information users, three litigation attorneys.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

The review of literature shows that the information environment has greatly impacted on law practicing, teaching, learning and research methods of higher education worldwide and India is no exception. The new technologies have facilitated smooth and systematic transformation of data into digital format. This has to be changed the process of access, retrieve and use of information by attorneys. The purpose of this study is to be examining the information seeking behaviour of lawyers. To understand the information seeking behaviour of lawyers the concerned literature has to be reviewed. Questionnaire should be randomly distributed to get the responses. The study mainly concentrates on frequency of visit to the library, purpose of information seeking, computer acquaintance, amount of time spent on information gathering activities, problem faced in information seeking, etc.

Majority of the lawyers are familiar with using offline and online legal databases. However, the lawyers face the problem of information overload on internet and lack of skills to search information. Hence, the study recommends that formal users training programme shall be conducted to optimize the use of information sources and services. [20]

Thus the following can be observed from the review of literature.

1. There is a need for conducting extensive exploratory studies in wider geographical proximity in different setting.
2. No specific studies exclusively on information seeking behavior in digital environment, of lawyers is reported.
3. There is lack of studies on critical evaluation of lawyer's information seeking behavior in digital environment.

Against this backdrop, it is felt necessary to lay emphasis on these aspects in the present study. Hence, it is proposed to examine information needs and gathering habits of lawyers in digital environment at High Court Bangalore. The study also proposed to examine the awareness and use levels of the lawyers as regards digital information viz, information products, resources, services, etc.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

"Information Needs and Gathering Habits of Lawyers: A Study of Lawyers of Karnataka High Court".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The primary objective of the study is to information gathering habits of lawyers. The specific objectives are as follows,

1. To identify the Information needs of lawyers.
2. To identify the Information gathering habits of lawyers.
3. To investigate the level of use of various information sources.
4. To study the methods of searching information.
5. To find out the reasons for non use of information.
6. To give suggestions.

HYPOTHESIS:

The physical attributes like gender, academic performance, level of handling cases, economic status, domicile, lawyers back ground, location of the court; have to bearing on the Information need and gathering habits of lawyers in digital environment.

METHODOLOGY:

There are various methods of research such as Survey Method, Case study Method, Historical Method, Experimental Method etc. For the present study the Survey Method of research shall be most suitable and appropriate for the collection of data to know the Information Needs and Gathering of Lawyers in Digital Environment, in Bangalore. There are various data collection tools such as Interview, Observation, and Questionnaire etc for collecting primary data from the respondents. Here in this the Questionnaire is most suitable for my research, since the data can be collected directly from the respondents. And the questions will be asked according to the objectives of my study. Questionnaire will be designed very carefully so that it may prove to be effective in collecting the relevant information.

Further, Multi stratified sampling method will be used for selection of sample. In this technique, the population is stratified in to a number of non-overlapping subpopulation or strata and sample items will be selected from each stratus is based on simple random sampling. In this study, the population stratified into male and female. The primary data will be collect from the sample population through questionnaire method will be analyzed with the help of statistical tools like percentage, average, and weighted averages to make projections and to draw meaningful conclusions and further substantiated through statistical tests. Besides, the secondary data is collected from sources like text books, reference books, national and international journals and thesis etc.

STUDY POPULATION:

The study population consists of lawyers at High Court of Karnataka, Bangalore. The study population comprises of male and female.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present study is mainly based on the primary data collected from sample respondents and the following limitations have been identified.

The scope of the present study is explorative in nature and shall be limited to the Information needs and gathering habits of lawyers, further it is limited to digital environment, and geographically confined to Bangalore. The study is based on the opinions expresses by lawyers under study.

Further it is restricted to the extent of assessing the information needs, awareness about digitized information and gathering habits. The limitations of the methodologies adopted also apply to the study. In addition the cost and time constraints, as the work has to be completed within the stipulated period.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

This study focuses on the present status of lawyers gathering habits through digital environment. Our images of information affect the way we are able to think about the world we live in, because nothing can move without information and information processing. But now with the emergence of electronic media the potential to store large quantity of information has increased, with an advantage of accessing and transferring it to any place and from anywhere in the world through electronic means using advanced network facilities.

It aims at identifying the existing and required knowledge of lawyers gathering skills for accessing the quality of information in digital format. This study can helps in an improving the lawyers, when they needed help from an assistant to find information materials that time the relevant resource person will give guidelines to searching or assist through the effective training programmes or help from library personnel's in accessing the information through digital environment.

In this context present work is of high relevance to the problem of information seeking behavior is that before the Internet, lawyer how to seek out and make use of information sources, and since the Internet, that problem has been both magnified and

obscured the hit-or-miss approach used by these information seekers may be inefficient, but by reason of the sheer quantity of information available, they usually manage to find something relevant. But determining their level of understanding a lawyer can guide them on the use of information sources and a lawyer can develop awareness among those clients. Hence, in the present, an attempt shall be made to Information needs and gathering habits of lawyers in digital environment.

STATISTICAL TESTING:

Appropriate statistical testing like ANOVA, z-test, and Chi Square test will be used to statistically verify the data and analyze the results.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:

Information:

Information in its most restricted technical sense is a sequence of symbols that can be interpreted as a message. Information can be recorded as signs, or transmitted as signals. Information is any kind of event that affects the state of a dynamic system. Conceptually, information is the message being conveyed.

Information Need:

A gap in a person's knowledge that, when experienced at the conscious level as question, gives rise to a search for an answer. If the need is urgent, the search may be perused with diligence until desire is fulfilled. Persons with information need often end up at the reference desk of a library where it is the responsibility of the reference librarian to determine the precise nature of the need. In order to search the online catalogue or bibliographic databases, the need must be expressed in form a query.

Information Seeking Behavior:

Information seeking behavior refers to the way people search for the utilize information. It is the micro-level of behavior employed by the searcher in interacting with information systems of all kinds, be it between the seeker and the system, or the pure method of creating and following up on a search.

Legal Practitioners/Lawyers:

A legal practitioner (lawyer) is a person who practices law, as a barrister, judge, attorney, counsel (counselor at law) or solicitor. Law is the system of rules of conduct established by the sovereign government of a society to correct wrongs, maintain the stability of political and social authority, and deliver justice. Working as a lawyer involves the practical application of abstract legal theories and knowledge to solve specific individualized problems, or to advance the interests of those who hire lawyers to perform legal services.

Digital environment:

A natural environment is all living and non-living things that occur naturally on Earth, a digital environment is a created world within a computer, or a group of computers. What becomes interesting is that, unlike in the real world, within this digital world you can record everything that happens and this trace becomes as digital footprint.

CHAPTERIZATION:

The present study will be divided into the following chapters.

CHAPTER-I: Introduction

In this chapter the need for the study will be established and statement of the problem will be enumerated. Objectives of the study and hypothesis framed will be indicated. It will bring out of the scope and limitation of the study.

CHAPTER-II: Research Design and Methodology

Factors considered in the identification of the study population, development of the questionnaire, methodologies to be adopted for the survey, characteristics of study population, statistical tests to be employed will be discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER-III: Review of Literature

This chapter provides a review of related literature on the topic.

CHAPTER-IV: Data Analysis

It includes the description of the data, their analysis and results thus obtained from them. In essence this chapter presents the entire data and their analysis drawing results from them.

CHAPTER-V: Summary of Findings and Suggestions

A brief summary of the findings based on the results of the survey and discussions shall be enumerated. Further suggestions will be given.

Bibliography:

At the end a bibliography arranged alphabetically by authors name will be provided. Questionnaires used for the study will be appended.

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